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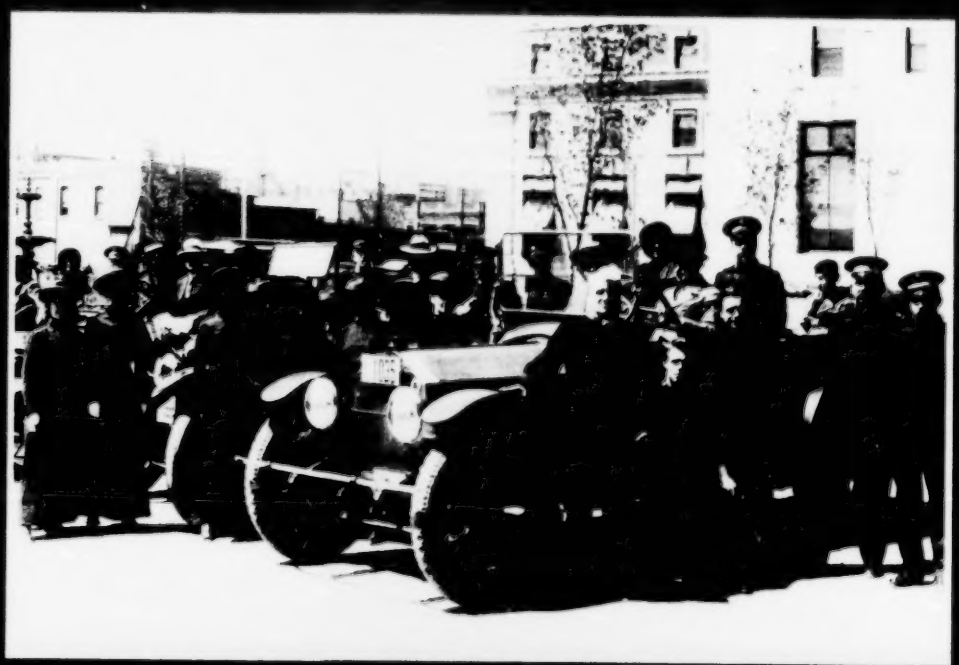
THE SALVATION ARMY



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Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation

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THE SALVATION ARMY

The needs of the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the dispossessed have posed a challenge throughout Manitoba's history. Modern efforts chiefly involve comprehensive, tax-supported social welfare programmes administered by public sector agencies. These have, however, been relatively recent developments. Until well into the 1900s, economically distressed Manitobans relied heavily upon private systems of social relief supported through voluntary contributions.

Whether because of the hardening of local attitudes toward the needy, or the sheer exhaustion of available resources, these systems were apt to prove inadequate at the very moment they were needed most. Notwithstanding this, private agencies were also marked by a great diversity of social thought, personal circumstance, religious belief, and cultural tradition which greatly enriched the province. While examples of these private systems of relief are to be found in immigrant self-help associations based on ethnic and national ties and early trade union support for members facing sudden destitution or bereavement, churches and church-sponsored charitable initiatives were probably the first and most broadly based of these private channels of relief.

The Salvation Army ministry to the material and spiritual needs of dispossessed Manitobans was a paramount venture in good works during the province's pioneer period. Centred in Winnipeg, but with a presence in other Manitoba centres, the Army has established a continuing tradition of community service which is now more than a century old. Its especially noteworthy contributions include some of the earliest places of refuge and sources of support for those subject to the hunger, misery, neglect, and exploitation prevalent in the early western Canadian historical experience. The opening of The Salvation Army Grace Hospital in Winnipeg on 15 May 1906 crowned an already substantial record of good works by Army adherents in the province. This new facility provided modern obstetrical care and maternity services, as well as a unique milieu within which to deliver the Army's "rescue work" programme to the city's destitute women.

Salvation Army members' yeoman service in the social assistance field can be traced directly to its formation as a distinct Christian denomination, established in England in 1865 by a dissident Methodist minister, William Booth. Today, while perhaps distinctive in some matters of doctrinal emphasis and ministerial approach, The Salvation Army is widely respected among Manitobans of all religious backgrounds.

Dinner for families of the unemployed at a Winnipeg Salvation Army barracks, c. 1906.
Courtesy The Salvation Army

The Pioneering Years

Only sketchy evidence survives concerning The Salvation Army's early presence in Manitoba, which was established unofficially as early as the spring of 1883. Those involved were members of a Winnipeg family named Vinall, formerly of Brighton, England, who were veterans of a Salvation Army corps in Sussex. Members of the family were instrumental in persuading Army administrators at headquarters in central Canada to dispatch an official corps to Winnipeg in late 1886.

The earlier trailblazing by the Vinalls in Winnipeg was not greeted with unanimous applause. Presumably, many Winnipeggers first learned about the presence of Salvationists in their midst by way of an item in the local press of May 1883:

> The advance guard of the Salvation Army is here, and a couple of female cranks sang and prayed in the post office yesterday. If the morals of the community need correction, it will have to be done by some other means than this kind of foolery.

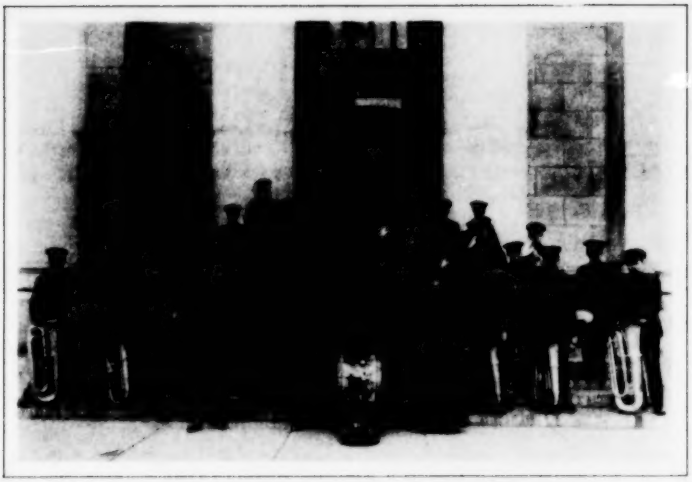
This brief notation obviously can tell little about its intended target. Even so, its acrimonious tone might be symptomatic of the social atmosphere within which pioneer Salvationists found themselves. Despite the occasional venting of journalistic spleen, many inhabitants of the young city likely needed all the help they could get — including prayer and song.

At the time, Winnipeggers acutely felt the collapse of the western Canada land boom of 1881-82. The advent of the railway era in the new West saw hordes of feverishly hopeful people crowd into the ill-prepared Manitoba capital to embark upon a monumental binge of real estate speculation. The spectacular collapse of the boom, however, left many individuals stranded and friendless in a harsh, mucky-streeted city of tents and strangers. Humane social considerations had not loomed large during the boom, and dire personal emergencies now were rampant in its wake.

Within this context, to sneer at solace extended to victims of the collapse was a luxury which few could afford. Certainly, not everyone considered The Salvation Army's ministry to be the stuff of "foolery". The Vinalls had introduced Salvationism to the city by conducting meetings out-of-doors and in an assembly hall rented at the corner of Main Street and Market Avenue. Reportedly, they were rewarded by an encouraging response from other Christians in the community. The Vinalls and their new associates soldiered on alone for three years until Commissioner T.B. Coombs of Toronto — acting upon a request by Frank Vinall — assembled a unit of three men and three women and dispatched them to Winnipeg under the command of Staff Captain Arthur Young.

Young's small unit arrived in Winnipeg on 10 December 1886 and within days, 45 people had professed their conversion to Salvationism at a meeting held in Victoria Hall on Notre Dame Avenue. In January 1887, a newspaper reported that salvation meetings were "crowded to the doors every night," and that 300 converts had been already won. Although this estimate was undoubtedly exaggerated, there can be little argument that the corp's hybrid message of social conscience and spiritual precept appealed to many listeners, and that Young's zeal prompted a flurry of excitement which was not alone confined to Winnipeg. No doubt heartened by the response in the capital, Young and his coreligionists struck out at smaller Manitoba centres.

Young made his first tour of the countryside in late January 1887 and by December 1888 new corps were in place in the fledgling Manitoba communities of Brandon, Neepawa, Morden, Minnedosa, and Carberry. Generally speaking, however, the rural Manitoba campaign met with sporadic success during the Salvation Army's early years in the province. Efforts to establish corps in the smaller centres appear to have suffered from too diffusely-focused energies and resources: during the 1890s, Canadian officers also were dispatched into the northern United States, even as corps began to founder in Manitoba. Local operations consequently ceased in Carman, Morden, Carberry, and Minnedosa during the period 1899 - 1912.



Salvation Army Band in front of the Bank of Montreal at Portage and Main, c. 1915.

Courtesy Foote Collection, Manitoba Archives

Only in Brandon did the Army make notable inroads. The local corps was established by Young on 24 January 1887. In 1889, amid festive evening displays of enormous Japanese parasols and Chinese lanterns, corps members and well-wishers celebrated the construction of a new $7,000 meeting hall and officers' quarters. Despite the indignity of being pelted with eggs at an open-air meeting in August, the Brandon corps had arrived to stay. By 1906, it was 100 members strong and reportedly proud of its 16-piece brass band. The corps opened a new citadel at Princess Avenue and Seventh Street on 5 April 1908.

New corps were also being established in Winnipeg throughout this period and by 1915 eight corps were in operation. This greatly helped the Army to expand and diversify its services. In turn, Winnipeg became the pre-eminent focal point for Salvationist facilities in the province. This was formally acknowledged in 1914 when Winnipeg was selected as the headquarters for western Canada operations. From Winnipeg, new corps were subsequently launched in other centres, including The Pas, Virden, and Swan River during 1916-20.

Winnipeg's hand had been strengthened as a Salvationist base in 1892 with the establishment of Corps No. 2 in the city's North End, where recent immigrants to the city were beginning to congregate. The Army also invested in central facilities that year, and purchased a Baptist Church property on Rupert Avenue at King Street for $10,000. This location ensured close contact with many of those most in need of the Army's services.

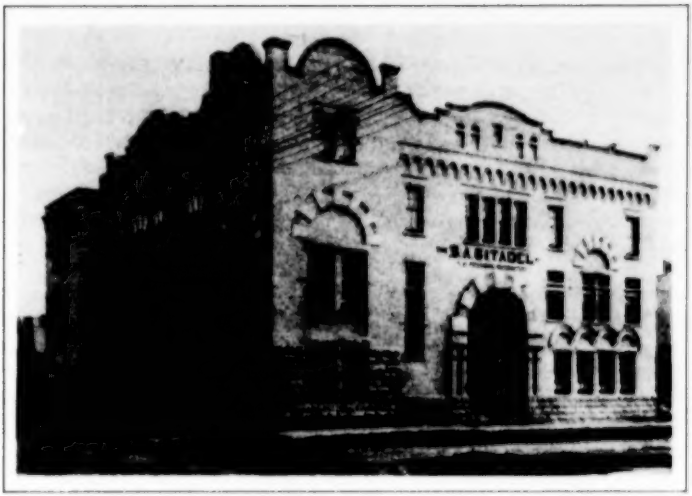
The Move To Main Street

Contemporary reports suggest that hundreds of destitute migrant men — the so-called "tramp element" — routinely relied upon the Rupert Avenue church and barracks as a place of shelter. In 1894, The Salvation Army recognized that Winnipeg needed a better equipped facility where "clean, comfortable, healthy lodgings and substantial board" could be provided to the poor at minimal cost. Although this concern loomed large on the Army's agenda, the same cannot be said of city council, whose members rejected a request for financial contribution to the project.

However, after a two year delay, The Salvation Army opened a men's shelter at 686 Main Street in 1896. Clients were expected to help defray operating costs either by direct payment, or by working as sawyers in the Army's adjoining wood lot. In keeping with the Salvationists' desire to address both their material and spiritual needs, food and shelter were offered in conjunction with spiritual guidance. Prayer meetings were conducted each evening at the men's shelter.

In 1900, the Rupert Avenue barrack facilities were demolished to make way for a more adequate, three-storey structure designed by J. Wilson Gray of Toronto. The new building included administrative offices, officers' quarters, a band-room, and two meeting halls with a combined ability to accommodate more than 1200 people. The new building proved a focal point of Salvation Army efforts in Winnipeg for several decades to come. The Salvation Army received a resounding vote of public confidence in connection with this project. In a six-month period, citizens contributed $10,000 to the Army's building fund. Public opinion also favoured Army efforts to establish a summer camp for the children of needy families.

With the advent of the twentieth century, the Army's Manitoba facilities and programmes for destitute men far surpassed their modest forerunners. Social crises — such as the First World War and the Depression of the 1930s — witnessed timely responses by the Army's Winnipeg corps. For example, The Salvation Army billeted hundreds of returned soldiers in 1919 after it acquired two Winnipeg hotels for this purpose. And during the Depression, a single six-month period in 1931 saw the Army dispense 18,000 parcels of clothing, 8500 meals, and provide beds to thousands of needy migrant men.



The Rupert Avenue Citadel, c. 1903.
Courtesy Manitoba Archives

By this time, too, The Salvation Army's redoubtable ongoing venture in the collection and distribution of donated clothing, furniture and other goods had become a familiar staple of community welfare activity in Manitoba. The Army's first depot was opened for this purpose in 1906 at Logan Avenue and King Street. Those who could afford to paid nominal sums for items purchased there, but clothing was provided at no cost to those who could not. Depot sales revenue was used to offset operating costs, and to provide for "the entirely destitute." Several individuals were employed to collect and repair donated goods.

Around the turn of the century, then, Manitoba's "Sally Ann" already was sponsoring the men's shelter and used-goods depot operations with which the Army today is readily (and perhaps too superficially) associated. It bears emphasis that these programmes were, and remain, the most visible outward forms of a religious ministry which establishes a clear link between the alleviation of temporal misery through charitable works and the salvation of souls. It must also be added that men's shelter programmes and the operation of second-hand depots represent only part of the story of Salvation Army efforts in Manitoba.

The Ministry to Women: Continuity and Change

Some of the Salvation Army's paramount and most distinctive contributions to community welfare in the province have involved services targeted specifically toward the special needs and hardships endured by destitute women.

The seeds of these noteworthy efforts were sown during the Army's pioneering years in the province, but came to full fruition only after 1905. The construction and operation of a fully-accredited modern hospital arose directly from one of the Army's earliest social projects in the West: the Winnipeg Rescue Home and Children's Shelter, which ministered to unwed mothers, deserted wives, and prostitutes.

The Rescue Home initially was opened at 490 Ross Street in December 1890. Led by Captain Lawlor, who had worked in a similar facility operated by the Army in Toronto, staff members began by visiting police, prison, and hospital officials, "besides visiting from door to door in the poorer areas and learning from enquiry of homeless and friendless ones."

This likely is one of the earliest-known local instances of the social work strategies now known as "outreach" and "networking". It soon resulted in an unanticipated demand for Rescue Home services. This situation compelled staff members to visit the city's market square on a rather different sort of outreach mission: to solicit donations of food. The Rescue Home sustained a $100 deficit during its first year of operation. The deficit was eliminated through private contributions. Nevertheless, resources available to the Rescue Home seldom kept pace with the demands upon its services, demands which onerously and steadily increased during the 1890s.

In October 1894, the Rescue Home was relocated in a brick house at 486 Young Street. These new quarters were spacious enough to accommodate the needs of 12 women and 12 children, and featured a sewing room, kitchen facilities, as well as a meeting room and reception area. Day-to-day activities were supervised by a matron assisted by four other resident Salvation Army officers, and were devoted chiefly to work periods interspersed with periods of prayer. The women harboured by the Rescue Home were expected to rise early, and could end their day by attending night classes which were conducted to instruct the illiterate.

Virtually from the time of its establishment, health care considerations were an important aspect of the Rescue Home project. Its clientele were visited regularly by physicians who donated their services, and the home itself was initially described as "a refuge for aged poor women (and) respectable married women coming to the city for medical care." This initial orientation toward health-care considerations is particularly noteworthy in light of subsequent changes which were to situate Salvation Army rescue efforts firmly within a bona fide hospital setting. However, several interim developments combined to hamper the Rescue Home's viability as a simple refuge, much less as a conduit for medical services to destitute women.

On several important points, the Rescue Home experience signally failed to conform to the expectations of its founders. To begin with, the intended target population of aged and "respectable married women" failed to materialize. Instead, young itinerant women and prostitutes predominated. One major reason for this was clear. Sister institutions operated by other organizations apparently viewed the Rescue Home's advent as their cue to adopt unhelpfully-selective new admission policies. For one, the Christian Women's Union Home fastidiously declined to accept "the more degraded cases." Meanwhile, perhaps with mixed feelings, the Army discovered that clients relied upon the Rescue Home for terms longer than the six-to-nine months contemplated by planners. Further unforeseen constraints were imposed by the considerable proportion of discharged clients who sought readmission. In 1898, these clients accounted for fully one-third of the 74 women who passed through the home.

At the close of the nineteenth century, resources were strained severely, despite contributions from private citizens and modest grants tendered by provincial and civic officials. In the short term, this translated into overcrowding: some women in the home could not be offered proper beds, but slept on stretchers in a hallway. However, in the longer term, this difficult situation likely influenced Salvation Army officials in favour of a hospital venture of considerable stature and staying power. One early indication of this lay in the increasing number of maternity cases directly handled at the home, whereas expectant mothers previously had been dispatched to Winnipeg General Hospital for their confinement. Moreover, the idea of an independently-operated Salvation Army hospital was associated with no less a personage than Commissioner Evangeline Booth, the daughter of the Army's founder.

"The Grace"

The Salvation Army Grace Hospital of Winnipeg was incorporated by the provincial government on 8 February 1904. This enabled the Army to proceed with acquisition of a suitable site and to commission the architectural services of John Woodman. Several locations were vetted before the Army selected a 12-lot land parcel which lies between Evanson and Arlington streets, south of Preston Avenue in the city's West End. Title was acquired at a cost of about $6,000.

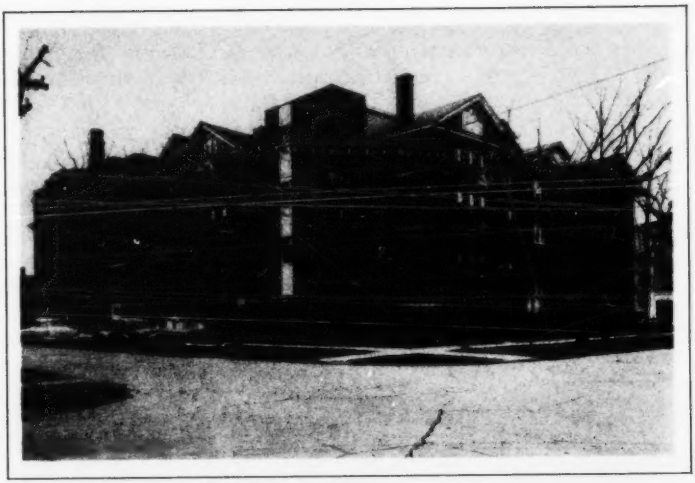
The hospital building, a four-storey structure of red brick trimmed with Tyndall stone, was constructed at a cost of $48,000, offset by a $10,000 grant from the province and a civic contribution of $7,500. Carpenters finished the hospital interior in oak and British Columbia fir. In addition to laboratory and treatment facilities, Woodman's design incorporated two large rescue wards on the top floor, along with ground-level facilities for meetings. At the time, the new hospital was somewhat removed from the nearest homes, and it was only later that a residential neighbourhood grew up around it. Appropriately, Commissioner Coombs — who had been responsible for dispatching the first Salvation Army unit to Winnipeg two decades earlier — was on hand along with a crowd of 1,000 to preside at the Grace Hospital opening ceremony on 15 May 1906.

The original structure could accommodate up to 130 women and children upon opening. Thereafter, a series of major construction projects dramatically increased the Grace Hospital's capacity and complexity. These projects were completed in 1910, 1916, 1927, 1938, and 1947, and were capped with the construction of a new maternity wing during the 1950s. In general, these initiatives were intended to keep Grace Hospital abreast of the changing needs and circumstances of an expanding city and district population, but also reflected the increasing sophistication of health-care knowledge and techniques. As the practice of medicine became more refined, the services offered by the hospital began to diversify, resulting in the establishment of the Grace as a general hospital in 1929, and its accreditation as such by the American College of Surgeons in 1930.

The Grace Hospital entered this new phase of its history with a well-established reputation for high standards of patient care, exemplified in its weathering of the deadly influenza epidemic of 1918-19 without the loss of a single adult patient. Other early strengths in earning this reputation included a one-year special programme in obstetric nursing, which had been launched in 1906, when the hospital itself was virtually as new as the 200 infants born during the year. Up-to-date facilities, coupled with praiseworthy administration, had also attracted a large number of obstetricians to the Grace in its early years, thereby guaranteeing its reknown as a maternity hospital. However, the hospital's identity as a "Sally Ann" institution also was of inestimable importance as a source of strength — not least of all in terms of community attitudes toward it.

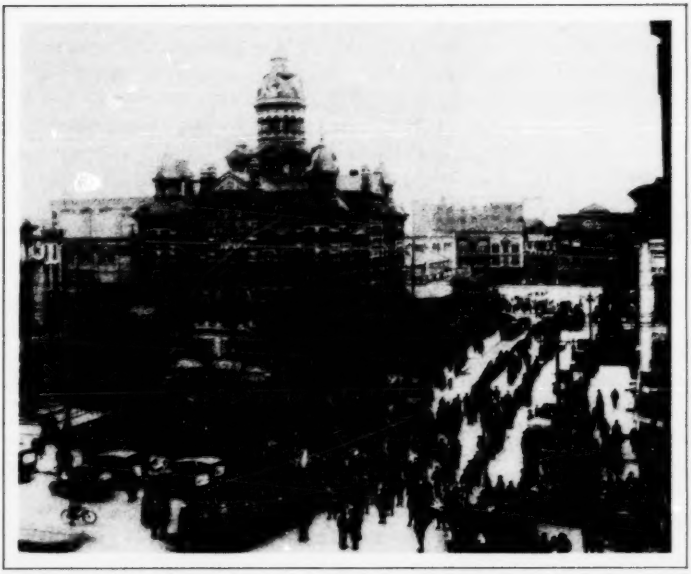
The First World War era — a period of acute financial difficulties at Grace Hospital — furnishes a case in point. The tenor of this grim period was wrenchingly established in May 1914, when Commissioner David Rees, Grace Hospital president, Colonel Sidney Maidment, vice-president, and Adjutant Nettie Beckstead, the assistant superintendent, were lost at sea in the sinking of the *Empress of Ireland*. The hospital's administrative structure was reorganized shortly thereafter, accompanying the selection of Winnipeg as headquarters for The Salvation Army's newly-delimited Canada West theatre of operations. The facility's administration was, however, unable to curtail a mounting debt burden, despite rigourous scrutiny of expenditures and postponement of capital projects and the financial situation only worsened throughout the war years. By mid-1918, accumulated liabilities stood at $10,000 and the Grace faced the unappetizing prospect of defaulting upon payment of its property-rental fees.

This cheerless situation inspired a redoubtable expression of community support for The Salvation Army and its hospital. Public response to the first-ever Winnipeg Red Shield Campaign netted $60,000 — of which $25,000 was channelled directly to the distressed hospital. A less substantial corollary development was the implementation of the annual Grace Hospital Baby Tag Day in 1919, which raised $4,000 the first time it was staged.



The Grace General Hospital, c. 1955.
Courtesy The Salvation Army

Nurses and babies at Grace Hospital, 1914.
Courtesy Foote Collection, Manitoba Archives



The Salvation Army Red Shield Campaign parade, 1918.
Courtesy Foote Collection, Manitoba Archives

But if The Salvation Army was able to draw upon special resources in supporting its hospital, it likewise faced a special liability which other hospitals were spared.

This liability — deliberately and vigourously embraced by the Army — was the rescue work component of the Grace Hospital endeavour. Only in the mid-1950s did the institution begin to devote itself solely to providing health care. True to the deeply-felt and stubborn convictions of those officers who had conceived of a Salvation Army hospital for Winnipeg, the women's rescue component remained integral to the institution. This situation exerted a significant influence upon the hospital's financial balance sheets, upon the utilization and changing contours of the physical plant, and upon the lives of many brutalized, degraded, and dispossessed Manitoba women (and of course, their children).

The Arlington Street complex was superceded in 1967 by the construction of a new Grace General Hospital on Portage Avenue in St. James-Assiniboia, now a suburb of Winnipeg.

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For more than a century, The Salvation Army has ministered to the spiritual and material needs of Manitobans. Despite the advent of large-scale tax-supported social welfare programmes, the Army continues to occupy a venerable place in the religious and charitable life of the province's inhabitants.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The contributions of The Salvation Army to Canadian social and religious life are discussed in three book-length treatments: Arnold Brown's *What Hath God Wrought? A History of the Salvation Army in Canada*, Salvation Army Printing and Publishing (Toronto, 1952); R.G. Moyles' *The Blood and Fire in Canada: A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion, 1882-1976*, Peter Martin Associates (Toronto, 1977) and Robert Collins, *The Holy War of Sally Ann: the Salvation Army in Canada*, Western Producer Prairie Books (Saskatoon, 1984). A useful contextual source is S.D. Clark's *Church and Sect in Canada*, University of Toronto Press (Toronto, 1948), as is Dennis Guest's *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, University of British Columbia Press (Vancouver, 1980). A.F.J. Artibise's *Winnipeg, a Social History of Urban Growth, 1874 - 1914*, McGill-Queen's University Press (Montreal, 1975) contains much information that is directly relevant to appreciating the local conditions in which The Salvation Army launched its ministry in the city. A contemporary source is Marion Bryce's "Historical Sketch of the Charitable Institutions of Winnipeg", Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transactions, No. 54 (Winnipeg, 1899).

Credits

The cover photograph showing Salvation Army officers at Winnipeg's CPR Station is taken from the Foote Collection and is printed courtesy of the Manitoba Archives.

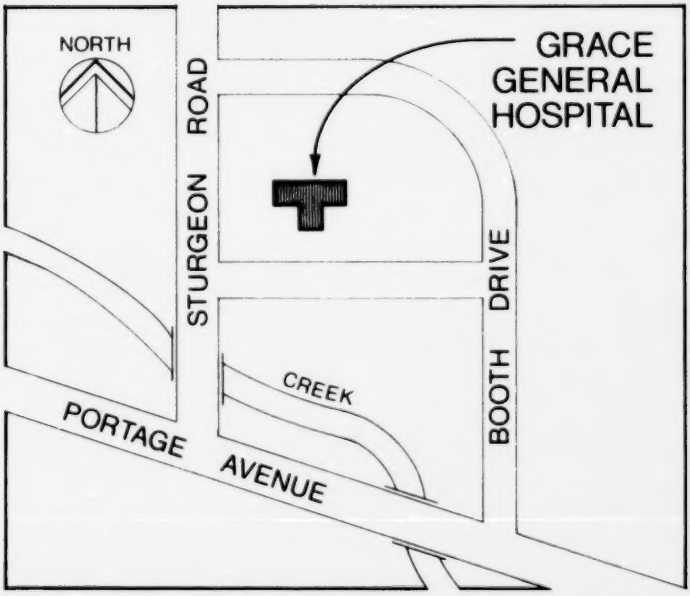
The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army was founded in London, England, in 1865 by William Booth in response to the wretched conditions of the urban poor. As a Christian Church with an acute social conscience, The Salvation Army offers its "heart to God and its hand to man".

The first Winnipeg Corps was established in December 1886. Four years later, the Army founded the Rescue Home and Children's Shelter on Ross Avenue for destitute women and children. This home functioned until 1904 when Grace Hospital became the first incorporated hospital of The Salvation Army in Canada. A new hospital opened in 1906 on Arlington Street. Extensions were added during the next sixty years to meet community needs. It served as a maternity facility until 1929 when it became a general hospital.

The new Grace General Hospital opened on this site in 1967.

The Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba



This plaque is located at the main entrance to the Grace General Hospital, 300 Booth Drive, in Winnipeg.